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A GUIDED TOUR OF THE INTERSTATE

by Vincent J. Lisi, MA

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Youngstown State University's upper division course in Transpersonal Studies concerns itself with expressions of consciousness beyond ego boundaries and the ordinary confines of time and space. While Christopher M. Bache, PhD (a graduate of *GATEWAY* and *LIFELINE*®) was on sabbatical, I was asked to teach the course for the Fall Quarter of 1995.

The immediate needs were to narrow the subject matter and to select the appropriate texts. The first half of the ten and one half week course presented the transpersonal area of reincarnation. The selected textbook was Dr. Bache's excellent work: *Lifecycles: Reincarnation and the Web of Life* (New York: Paragon House, 1990). To treat the transpersonal area of out-of-body experiences, Robert Monroe's *Ultimate Journey* was chosen as a "total cosmological overview" from which to understand all personal and transpersonal experiences. While other varieties of transpersonal studies (such as near-death experiences, past-life regressions, chemical research, hypnotic seeing, etc.) are interesting and provocative, only Bob's thoughts in *Ultimate Journey* seem to give a total view of reality. They are in the same category as the systematic philosophies and theologies of ancient, medieval and modern thinkers and East/West spiritual traditions.

We covered approximately four chapters a week and devoted about one hour and twenty-five minutes of each class to explanation and discussion and twenty-five minutes to reading from the text. Two observations are important. Completing the book in five weeks was challenging but still doable. There was enough time to explain key concepts, and the students appreciated the steady pace. Secondly, Bob's writing was so clear—and clearly illustrated by examples—that I was quite comfortable reading from the book to a greater extent than in all my previous years of teaching.

While each student had favorite ideas from Bob's teaching, there were several common highlights. From the first two chapters these were the conclusions that (1) you are more than your physical body and (2) that you do survive physical death (as well as the importance of

testing this “Different Overview”). Bob’s *insistence* on being responsible for converting one’s personal Unknowns into Knowns established a credibility level for future ideas and discussion.

The notion (Chapter Three) that we are free creative energy which leaves even anticipated Belief Territories when the worm of repetition “bores in” captured the imagination. The presentation in Chapter Six of a model of the human mind was also appreciated. Starting inside the Core Self and proceeding outward to Human Mind Radiation, Bob concluded with the characteristics of the Core Self from “Emotion” to “The Big Nugget” of Love. This synthesis seemed to be a good fit with students’ own perceptions of reality. The entire chapter expressed the essence of simultaneously existing in the two worlds of spirit and matter—“being in the world but not of the world.”

The seven rules of earth-life understanding in Chapter Seven clarified the idea of earth as a classroom from which we depart with all our earthly experience. Emphasizing the importance of their present earth life for future growth and development seemed uplifting to the students. The class found the material in Chapter Twelve on the “I-There”—“Inside the Inside”—absolutely exhilarating. The connection between the “I-There” of Monroe and the “Oversoul” of reincarnation described by Dr. Bache generated excitement over the dovetailing of concepts. At that point, the group listened to a Focus 10 tape from the *GATEWAY EXPERIENCE*® series. They were exceptionally receptive, and two people reported what felt like an out-of-body experience during the tape.

Bob’s Chapter Fifteen discovery journey was obviously the highlight. The accounts of the cosmology of human existence based on his experiences with the Aperture and Emitter were spellbinding. His dramatic Rote of understanding on p. 217, culminating in the words “This is as we know it to be,” was totally captivating. The Known Basic from Chapter Sixteen, that “the physical universe, including the whole of mankind, is an ongoing creative process,” illuminated and challenged. It seemed as if there was nothing more to add. Then a list of different options at the completion of one’s present earth life (including TMI programs) continued the process of “awareness expansion.” Logical organization, clear writing, and a multiplicity of examples make *Ultimate Journey* an ideal teaching instrument. Although students struggled at times with the complexity of the ideas, the essence of Bob’s thought still seemed to come through. The course was assessed in two ways. On the standard, anonymous evaluation, eighty-eight percent of the class said it not only improved their theoretical understanding of the subject matter but also resulted in a “better understanding of myself.” What a wonderful testimony to the power of both texts! Direct quotes included, “Unique class—unlike any other.”; “It triggers the imagination and makes you reevaluate many of your beliefs.”; “It has changed my way of thinking with regards to spirituality.”, and from a graduating senior “This course is the best I ever took at the University.” The second evaluation was through answers to the final exam question, “Of all the material taken in the course what have you found to be the most important and/or interesting?” Among the responses were “It helped me in the search for my true

purpose in life.”; “When something happens now, I say ‘What is this teaching me?’ rather than getting upset by it.”; “No longer do I feel pressure to ‘wrap it up’ in one lifetime.”; “Understanding that I am creative, free energy, I have stopped trying to control the freedom of others.”, and “We all travel the Interstate—some of us are just driving different makes of cars!” Not one comment was negative in tone or content.

Seeing growth and imagination enhanced and challenged and students’ life experience exposed to a different conceptual framework, one feels that true education has occurred—that unknowns are becoming knowns for many minds!

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